Presbytery of Missouri River Valley
Report of the Stated Clerk – TE, Rev. Nancy Ross-Hullinger

In the meeting information is a Digest of Actions for all the items needed recorded for 2025, that is my full report. But, in addition at our 1/20/26 Leadership Team Meeting/Training we voted to concur with two overtures from Homestead Presbytery going before the 227th General Assembly – Amending D-7.09 & D-.70901, and a Request for Authoritative Interpretation. The vote for concurrence is included in the minutes from the 1/20/26 Leadership Team Meeting. When you vote to accept the reports, you too are concurring with the overtures. These would be easy to overlook.

If a Presbytery is wanting to amend the constitution (make changes in the Book of Order) they need at least one Presbytery to concur with their overture. And that begins the long process – of making sure it is in to GA in a timely manner – there are required amount of days, it will go to a committee at GA, that committee will approve or disprove of the amendment, it can be approved or disapproved on the floor of GA, and after that if approved returns to the Presbyteries for a vote (which means we could see it again in 2027)

As you read the amendment, I wanted to point out that what is in brackets and underlined are additions to the current D-7.09, and what is in brackets and struck through is what is to be deleted.

Commission of Care (COM & CPM working toward one commission)
1/27/2026

- Approved Jody Filipi as secretary
- Approved COM minutes from 11/25/2025.
- Approved request from Fremont Presbyterian Church (Homestead Presbytery) for these pastors to labor outside the bounds of PMRV to administer the sacrament of Holy Communion on these dates:
    - Nicole Riebe – March 1, 2026
    - Jody Filipi – April 2, 2026 (Maundy Thursday) and April 5, 2026, Easter Sunday
- Approved Temporary Pastoral Agreements (TPR): (summaries)
    - Marcia Cline/Trinity Clarinda
      Full time, $50,000 CS; $13,750 BOP; $1,000 travel; $4,000 continuing education; $200 book allowance; 4 weeks vacation, 2 weeks continuing education; 6-week paid sabbatical.
    - Carolyn Grice/New Life Omaha
      19 hours/week; $28.400 housing; $8,400 deferred compensation; $1,500 travel; $710 continuing education; (4 weeks vacation 2 weeks continuing education)
    - Paul Williams/Anderson Grove/Bellevue
      15 hours/week; $6,000 CS; $17,200 housing; $8,000 mission work reimbursable; $2,000 travel; $1,420 Continuing education (professional development); 2 weeks vacation/"personal time" in (4-week time period max); 2 weeks continuing education (professional development), 6 weeks without pay for mission work/travel, 60-day termination.
    - Karen Moritz/Underwood Hills Omaha

14 hours/week; $22,180 CS; $100 per month reimbursable expenses; 4 weeks vacation; 2 weeks continuing education.
    - Nancy Ross-Hullinger/Bethany/Gethsemane/Council Bluffs
      19/15 hours week; $29,244/$23,320 CS; 0/$11,000 housing; $13,200 Fidelity; $550/0 travel; $1,200/0 continuing education; 4 weeks vacation; 2 weeks continuing education, (time) June 25-July 2, 2026, General Assembly.
    - Suzanne Gorhau/Riverside Presbyterian Parish, Carson/Oakland
      30 hours per week; 3 Sunday's a month; ES $47,600; Pension, Disability, Death 10% $4,760; Travel $1000; Continuing Education $5,000; 4 weeks vacation, 2 weeks continuing education.
- Approved dissolution of pastoral relationship between Bill McConnell and Murray Presbyterian Church, January 18, 2026, Congregational Meeting.
- Approved retirement status of Bill McConnell on February 28, 2026.
- Approved Suzanne Gorhau to Moderate Murray Presbyterian Church Session beginning March 2026.
- Approved Ordination Exam Readers for May 2026 – Keith Allen (RE) and Brian Long (TE)
- Verified the Interview Team of: Keith Allen, Jody Filippi, Marshall Ziemann, Pam Otto, Linda Reffert. Jody will gather the Interview Team.
- Received Thank you note from Becky Balestri.

OVERTURE
From
Homestead Presbytery
To
227th General Assembly (2026)

Request for Authoritative Interpretation

RECOMMENDATION

The Homestead Presbytery respectfully overtures the 227th General Assembly (2026) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to issue an Authoritative Interpretation regarding the Church Discipline D-7.0901 on Allegations of Sexual Abuse:

> What does the phrase "misuse of ordered ministry" include? Should it also be relevant to other forms of misconduct?

RATIONALE

In a recent disciplinary case, the Permanent Judicial Commission of Homestead Presbytery was called upon to reckon with a case of misuse of ordered ministry. Since "misuse of ordered ministry" was listed in D-7.0901 as a sole condition to support an allegation of sexual abuse, the PJC wrestled with this definition of sexual abuse given the circumstances of this particular case.

Homestead Presbytery has attempted to parse out this issue with our overture amending D-7.0901 of the Church Discipline.

The phrase "misuse of ordered ministry" is only used in the Book of Order in this one context of Allegations of Sexual Abuse; but is that the only context in which misuse of ordered ministry is relevant? Can it not be used for cases of financial abuse or abuse of power and authority or other actions contrary to the Scriptures and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)?

Therefore, we feel it important to seek formal clarification on what "misuse of ordered ministry or position" includes within our Church Discipline. We respectfully request an Authoritative Interpretation to guide our understanding.

*** *** *** ***

OVERTURE
From
Homestead Presbytery
To
227th General Assembly (2026)

Recommendation to Amend D-7.09 and D-7.0901

RECOMMENDATION

The Homestead Presbytery overtures the 227th General Assembly (2026) to direct the Stated Clerk to send the following proposed amendment to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes:
Shall D-7.09 and D-7.0901 be amended as follows:

(Text to be added is [in brackets and underlined]. Text to be deleted is ~~[in brackets and struck through]).~~

These sections would read as follows:

> **D-7.09:** ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL [MISCONDUCT] [~~ABUSE~~]
>
> **D-7.0901 -** Sexual [misconduct] [~~abuse~~] as stated in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures (2013) is a violation of the role of anyone called upon to exercise integrity, sensitivity, and caring in a trust relationship, is a misuse of authority and power that breaches Christian ethical principles, and takes advantage of the vulnerability of persons who are less powerful to act. Sexual misconduct is, therefore, antithetical to the gospel call to work as God's servant and violates the mandate to protect the vulnerable from harm. Sexual Misconduct is a comprehensive term which includes but is not limited to (a) sexual abuse defined as any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of 18 years or anyone without the capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, [or] intimidation ~~[or misuse of ordered ministry or position],~~ [(b) sexual assault], (c) sexual harassment, and (d) sexual malfeasance.] Sexual [misconduct] ~~[abuse]~~ is contrary to the Scriptures and the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and is therefore always [a misuse of ordered ministry or position] and an offense for the purpose of discipline.

RATIONAL

Section D-7.09 (ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE) addresses the manner in which allegations of "sexual abuse" are to be addressed. Allowing "misuse of ordered ministry" to be the sole criteria in identifying a behavior as sexual abuse opens the door for behaviors that would be more appropriately classified as sexual misconduct to be labeled as sexual abuse – a damaging label for the accused and one which limits opportunity for negotiated agreements.

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) Sexual Misconduct Policy and Its Procedures (2013) defines "sexual abuse" by quoting the then current *Book of Order*, D-10.0401c (quoted wording identical to the *Book of Order* 2025-2027, D-7.0901). The Policy identifies "sexual abuse" as just one of several situations falling under the umbrella of sexual misconduct. Section II of the document lists and defines specific situations that fall under this umbrella including child sexual abuse, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and sexual malfeasance.

Of concern is the manner in which D-7.0901 defines "sexual abuse":

> *". . . any offense involving sexual conduct in relation to any person under the age of 18 years or anyone without the capacity to consent, or any person when the conduct includes force, threat, coercion, intimidation,* ***or*** *misuse of ordered ministry or position."*

With this definition, "misuse of ordered ministry or position" may be used as the sole criteria to label a situation as "sexual abuse." A definition for "sexual conduct" is not provided.

"Sexual abuse" is not a casual term. In the medical and legal realm, the term has a specific and dramatic meaning. 18 U.S. Code 2242 (**https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/2242**) gives this definition of sexual abuse –

> *Whoever . . .knowingly—*
>
> *(1) causes another person to engage in a sexual act by threatening or placing that other person in fear (other than by threatening or placing that other person in fear that any person will be subjected to death, serious bodily injury, or kidnapping);*
>
> *(2) engages in a sexual act with another person if that other person is—*
>
> *(a) incapable of appraising the nature of the conduct; or*
>
> *(b) physically incapable of declining participation in, or communicating unwillingness to engage in, that sexual act; or*
>
> *(3) engages in a sexual act with another person without that other person's consent, to include doing so through coercion;*
>
> *or attempts to do so, shall be fined under this title and imprisoned for any term of years or for life.*

The American Psychological Association defines "sexual abuse" as:

> *"Any nonconsensual or exploitive sexual behavior or activity imposed on an individual without their consent. Although the term typically is used with reference to any sexual contact between adults and children, sexual abuse can also occur in any relationship of trust." (American Psychological Association. https://dictionary.apa.org/sexual-abuse). 11-15-2023.*

Sexual harassment and sexual malfeasance are forms of sexual misconduct that would not likely be legally defined as sexual abuse but would be examples of "misuse of ordered ministry" and therefore subject to disciplinary proceedings.

It is of interest to note that "misuse of ordered ministry" occurs nowhere else in the Book of Order (2025) other than as part of the definition of sexual abuse.

CONCERNS:
If the accused is found to be guilty of an allegation of sexual abuse, the verdict of "guilty of sexual abuse" becomes public to the Presbytery and is included in the Presbytery Minutes (D-9.0102b). To be identified as a sexual abuser has severe psychological, social and professional consequences that are damaging. This is of concern in situations when the only element of the behavior in question that satisfies the definition of "sexual abuse" as stated in D-7.0901 is "misuse of ordered ministry."

Therefore, Homestead Presbytery overtures that the wording of D-7.09 be amended to read "Allegations of Sexual Misconduct and that D-7.0901 be amended to (a) identify sexual abuse as one condition under the more comprehensive term of Sexual Misconduct, (b) move "misuse of ordered ministry" from the definition of "sexual abuse" and include it as an offense under the comprehensive umbrella of sexual misconduct as a behavior "contrary to the Scriptures. . . and therefore an offense for the purpose of discipline."

Perhaps the more comprehensive concepts of "sexual misconduct" and "misuse of ordered ministry" could also be incorporated into other sections of Church Discipline.

This approach is in keeping with D-1.01, "Preamble to Church Discipline," that states:

> *The power that Jesus Christ has vested in his Church, a power manifested in the exercise of church discipline, is one for building up the body of Christ, not for destroying it, for redeeming, not for punishing. It should be exercised as a dispensation of mercy and not of wrath, so that the great ends of the Church may be achieved, that all children of God may be presented faultless in the day of Christ (D-1.01).*

*** *** *** ***